



Both Flesh and Not: Essays

By David Foster Wallace

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Brilliant, dazzling, never-before-collected nonfiction writings by "one of America's most daring and talented writers." (*Los Angeles Times Book Review*).

Both Flesh and Not gathers fifteen of Wallace's seminal essays, all published in book form for the first time.

Never has Wallace's seemingly endless curiosity been more evident than in this compilation of work spanning nearly 20 years of writing. Here, Wallace turns his critical eye with equal enthusiasm toward Roger Federer and Jorge Luis Borges; *Terminator 2* and *The Best of the Prose Poem*; the nature of being a fiction writer and the quandary of defining the essay; the best underappreciated novels and the English language's most irksome misused words; and much more.

Both Flesh and Not restores Wallace's essays as originally written, and it includes a selection from his personal vocabulary list, an assembly of unusual words and definitions.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

This posthumous volume, appearing in the wake of D. T. Max's much-discussed biography of Wallace, *Every Love Story Is a Ghost Story* (2012), gathers 15 previously uncollected essays. Six are book reviews, 3 discuss the contemporary state or art of writing, 2 address tennis, and 1 is about Terminator 2. The remainder cover a range of Wallace's wide-eyed, "isn't it weird we take things like ad space at the U.S. Open for granted" subjects and scarily astute criticism. Published originally between 1988 and 2007, these essays demonstrate Wallace's interdisciplinary approach to both pop culture and abstruse academic discourse. For instance, his formal training in symbolic logic informs his opinion of two, in-his-opinion awful, math novels, Philibert Schogt's *The Wild Numbers* (2000) and Apostolos Doxiadis' *Uncle Petros and Goldbach's Conjecture* (2000), while his familiarity with the actual life and cranium-crunching philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein lends perspective to his appreciation of David Markson's *Wittgenstein's Mistress* (1988). For Wallace devotees, these essays are required reading. For everyone else, they're sometimes tough to get into but entirely worth the exertion. --Diego Báez

From Bookforum

Both Flesh and Not is David Foster Wallace at his best and his worst, but the thing about Wallace's best was that it usually contained his worst... If he's not going to court the reader, he's going to hold him in contempt. And you're going to listen to him because his is the most colossal intelligence in the room. —Gideon Lewis-Kraus

Review

Praise for *Both Flesh and Not*:

"Scarily astute. . . . Published originally between 1988 and 2007, these essays demonstrate Wallace's interdisciplinary approach to both pop culture and abstruse academic discourse...For Wallace devotees, these essays are required reading."? **Booklist**

On David Foster Wallace:

"The Best Mind of His Generation"? **A.O. Scott, *New York Times***

"A prose magician, Mr. Wallace was capable of writing...about subjects from tennis to politics to lobsters, from the horrors of drug withdrawal to the small terrors of life aboard a luxury cruise ship, with humor and fervor and verve. At his best he could write funny, write sad, write sardonic and write serious. He could map the infinite and infinitesimal, the mythic and mundane. He could conjure up an absurd future...while conveying the inroads the absurd has already made in a country where old television shows are a national touchstone and asinine advertisements wallpaper our lives."? **Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times***

"One of the most influential writers of his generation."? **Timothy Williams, *New York Times***

"A novelist with the industrial-strength intellectual chops to theorize even our resolutely anti-intellectual age....Wallace's ear for dialogue was unmatched in contemporary fiction."? **Lev Grossman, *Time***

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Alex Lynch:

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